

Human Nature and Government

AN ADDRESS

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by

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Mr. Chairman, Sir James Atkin, and gentlemen of the Canadian Club: I thank your gallant chairman for his very kindly introduction. It is the realization of a hope I have had for a long time, to be the guest of this club and organization for the good of Winnipeg, for the good of Canada, and therefore, for the good of everybody. I am glad to be in Winnipeg, and to breathe the atmosphere of enterprise and progress and determination, of courage, and of optimism, that is here. I have not had the pleasure yet of looking intimately into your city. I was here about three months ago, and was hospitably greeted by a committee of your citizens and requested to take a two hours' drive around the city; but as the hour was about 1 a.m., I decided to wait until I could look at the city in daytime, at a less suspicious hour.

It is a pleasure to be here on our present mission. When I left office in the United States, it was, as I said at Ottawa, with the full consent of the American people. I was not in that respect like your distinguished fellow-citizen and my distinguished colleague, Sir Thomas White: he went out while the going was good (laughed), and he remains an enigma to our people, a man who resigned a steady job.

I count it great good fortune to be upon the present important business, both because it affords me the opportunity of coming into close touch with important business in Canada and making wider an acquaintance, already somewhat extended, with your men and women, and because it brings me into contact and close quasi-political relationship with such distinguished men as Sir Walter Cassels and Sir Thomas White, with whom I now have the honor of being associated in an endeavor to solve one of your important questions.

I have been in Canada as a summer resident since 1918, and that, of course, has directed my attention especially toward Canadian questions. I have conversed and visited with you both personally, and in representa-

ties and policies. Those who wish to understand a people should go into their politics. After being subjected to criticism and getting into the campaign in their newspaper, one has a homelike feeling. That is why I cherish an opportunity such as the present one. I wish to testify to my admiration and deep interest in Canada and my confidence in her future. Canada, however, needs no verbal praise. Her war record entitles her to stand as one of the forward-looking, courageous, responsible nations of the world.

Now, I know something of Winnipeg through your Lieutenant-governor, the dynamic Sir James Alton. I have come under the influence of his system, and have had the great pleasure of attending the Canadian Bar Association in Ottawa, of which he is the effective and distinguished head. I felicitate you upon having such a citizen at the head of your provincial government.

The subject to which I shall direct my attention this afternoon may seem at first a little remote from you, although it is only across the border. I want to talk upon the guarantee of life, liberty and property, as they are contained in the Constitution of the United States, and to refer to the proposals with respect to the Constitution that have followed the war, coming from those who believe that after-war conditions require that society be completely reorganized.

We believe in popular government, in the United States. Our declarations in favor of it are embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. We believe in the rule of the majority; but that the rule of that majority needs necessary restraints from time to time, as tyranny by the majority over the minority is just as much to be avoided as tyranny by one man or a minority over the majority. We have therefore embodied in this written constitution principles, largely inherited from Great Britain's long struggle for freedom, which the majority may not violate; and under our system of administration, these are enforced through decisions of the courts whenever and whenever the individual is affected injuriously. They are framed in the language of the documents that contain the beginnings of English liberty. The great and most inclusive of these principles, both in the constitutions of the states and in the Constitution of the United States, and applicable to both state and United States government, is that "no man shall be deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law." The Declaration of Independence says "that every man is entitled to life, liberty, property, and pursuit of happiness;" and this principle is carried out in the Constitution. The 14th amendment provides that no state shall deprive any person of the equal protection of the law. A further provision, now when added to us, is that no state shall by law impair the obligation of a contract.

We have reached a time when there are those who criticize the validity of these constitutional declarations. There are professors of government, with the great moral experience in government, in some of our universities, who think these declarations are not complete and that they never of the excessive individualism of the eighteenth century.

We have reached a time when the community ideal is as much higher than the individualistic ideal (as any of these professors) than modification of these declarations is needed. I venture with due deference to think that these professors are not altogether familiar with the Constitution or with its interpretation in actual usage. It is not true that the rights specified in the Constitution are rigid rights mathematically defined. They differ with the change of conditions. The man, for instance, who lives on a plain, 100 miles from anybody, has liberty to be just as unsanitary as he chooses. Why? Because nobody can catch any of the diseases he may acquire by his unsanitary mode of life. But when he moves into town, or the town grows out to his place of abode, his right in the respect mentioned becomes modified. Why? Because now he owes a duty to his neighbor, and the principle of the Constitution is equality of right. The liberty of the nation is a great reservoir from which each man derives an equal amount. The more people there are, the more restricted in a way the liberty of each becomes. Community health restrictions, sometimes of a radical character, may thus be consistent with the spirit of the Constitution.

And so with the right of property, which is included in the right of liberty, as we have it declared in our Constitution. If a man has \$1,000, or \$1,000, or \$10,000, or any amount, he is entitled to use it for any legitimate purpose, or to combine his money with the money of others. The great advance in prosperity that has been made everywhere has been largely due to the combination of the money of many into a unit and so economically managed and invested to the best possible advantage. Labor has the same right to combine the capital has, in order that the laboring man may have equality of negotiating power with his employer. But the power of combination, whether it be of labor or capital, is tremendous and may result in abuses; and the public have the right to limit these abuses. They have limited them, with such laws as, for instance, our anti-trust law. All these limitations are embodied in legislation which is enforced.

Therefore, it is not true to say that we are not up-to-date with these guarantees in our Constitution, the administration of which is governed by circumstances; this prevents them from being an obstruction to the march of progress.

The truth is, that this attack upon the Constitution, to which I have referred, is not directed against any particular feature in it, as against the whole social order upon which our present society rests. It is directed against the right of property. Now, what is the right of property? It is the right of the man who works to enjoy his earnings—the right of the man who has earnings to save them and enjoy the benefit of the use of these savings, and to increase the product of labor by uniting savings with labor.

The right of property is the basis of our capitalist society. Some people think that, when our society is changed with being communistic, that is the end of the argument. Gentlemen, why not confess the truth. Why

not meet the issue and hit it right between the eyes, and recognizing that the only possibility of the material progress of the world to-day is the preservation of the institution of private capital. When the sage man learned that it was wise not to gorge himself, but to lay aside some of his gathered titbit roots for the next day, he became the first practiser of capitalistic principles.

How has progress been made in the world? Material progress has been made by industry—that is, by labor, by saving, by invention, by the genius of organization. These are the main elements in increasing the producing power of labor a millionfold. The root of progress is the motive of gain, directed so man as he is. It is the spring of the law of self-preservation. Call it selfishness if you choose; it is the only lasting motive, by and large, among all men, in the years that come and go. Some men have other and higher motives for labor, invention and organization. But this is the only general moving cause that will move, the motive of gain. You say that leads to perpetuating a reign of selfish selfishness. That is an error; that is not the way it develops. You cannot take that motive away without paralyzing progress; but when you give reasonable sway to it, prosperity comes, physical comfort comes, and then men and women begin to see the truth with respect to happiness and begin to find out that happiness does not result only and solely, or at all, if other elements are not present, in the accumulation of money and the comforts of the selfish life. Material prosperity is essential, that we may have the higher things. We must have reasonable comfort for all in order that we may develop the higher interests. What time has the care-wrangler struggled day after day for his mere living, to develop thoughts of his relation to God? His brain becomes strangled, his ideals choked. We cannot, therefore, dispense with any essential element that makes for continuance of material prosperity. When you have that you have men beginning to recognize that mere accumulation of wealth has nothing to do with the happiness of man, unless it is accompanied by intellectual and active enjoyment, or by the joy of service for others, love of family, community, neighborhood, state, mankind. Out of that material comfort flower the higher developments of man.

These things may be commonplace, but it seems to me that in these days we ought to clarify some things and endeavor to justify the society in which we live. Now, as to the inequalities which it is said are produced. I believe that the world is devolving more and more attention to the submerged part of our population, the men and women who live below a certain line of reasonable comfort. I believe that it is the legitimate object of government to so change conditions of life with that submerged section as to bring them above that line of reasonable comfort. Above this line, the inequalities serve a good purpose of keeping up within those who have not attained fortune, that ambition which is essential to progress.

It is, however, not true that those successful in a worldly sense are happier than those who are merely

comfortable, or who are only moderately prosperous. The fundamental error of the Socialists is that he works upon the basis that happiness is in proportion to the number of dollars a man has, above that line to which I referred. This is not true, and you all know it is not true. Are the millionaires you know the happiest people you know? How much real happiness do ten or fifty millions of dollars give a man, except that of helping others with it? He does not spend it all. He can't. He has got to sit up nights thinking upon means to invest it. Then, again, we ought to get over the habit of thinking we ourselves are unhappy because someone else has this means of happiness. If we are considerably greater apparent comfort of others should not arouse our hatred of them. Of course, there are mean, stingy men who get their happiness inavid accumulation of wealth, without the slightest consideration of others. The community rightly despises them. You say such a man does not care that his joy is in his wealth. Which of you would wish to change places with him? Senator Conklin is dead, who told the story of the stranger who arrived in the New England town on the day of the death of the town's richest and meanest man. "What was the complaint?" the stranger asked. "No complaint," returned a citizen, "everybody is satisfied."

We have laws to prevent the abuses by the selfish rich man of the power which, under our system, wealth conveys. But, as a rule, the wealthy men of this country and the United States have realized their responsibilities, and it is becoming much more general than ever before for these wealthy men to make large foundations for accomplishing good. In our country, if you say anything in defense of wealth or capital, they point at you the Rockefellers, Carnegies, Fords, and say, "That is what you have." We have them, it is true; but as compared with the great mass of wealth, they have a small amount. Wealth is today more widely distributed than ever.

We can best judge the merits of our own system by comparison with, for instance, that of Russia where, with a clean slate after the revolution, they adopted the Marxian system of Socialist philosophy—that of hatred for every other class but the lowest proletariat—a very poor basis for the improvement of society. They eliminated from any control of government the intellectual class—professors, clergymen, lawyers, everybody of any intellectual acquisition, and all with any income-earning property. In that country, the farmer has one vote in the selection of the Soviets which rules them, municipally, provincially, federally—a Soviet over all. But the farmer has this one vote only if he does not employ anybody. If he employs one man even, he is a capitalist and cannot vote. If he has anybody to help him at all, he cannot vote. The industrial laborer is in the same position; if he employs a helper, he cannot vote. Plumbers, you see, could not vote. That industrial laborer has eight votes as compared with the farmer. But there is again another class which has ten times as many as the industrial laborer and eighty times as many as the farmer. That is the soldier—the member of the Red Guard. Russia

in, you see, a military autocracy. Their plan of society has developed the necessity for force to be used in its administration. They have plundered the class whose activities are necessary for material progress—the bourgeoisie—the enterprising people, the people who establish plants and organize capital. So the Bourgeoisie have become Bolsheviks—naturally. The reason why Russia's power has to use force in the government of the people is, having removed the natural master of man, it is the only available substitute. That is slavery of labor.

Now, is it possible that the people of this country and the United States are going to consent to the subjugation of any system of that kind in place of their present liberty? The Russian tyranny will come to a natural end, because it will burn itself out. It has been a very expensive institution for Russia and a very painful one; but it has been a good thing for the world because it has been an illustration of a Socialist system actually in operation. It has demonstrated the unreasonableness of attempting to change the economic laws. These economic laws work just like the law of gravity. Something interferes with them—there is a temporary local disturbance—but they soon return again to their natural operation. The reason why Socialism will always be an utter failure is because it is not adapted to men as we know them and as they are. The perfect government for the perfect man is an utter failure with men as we know them—because they are not perfect.

When a man gets up on a barrel-head and denounces everybody and everything, without having any very clear conception of what he wants, except to plunder, we sometimes make the mistake of thinking that everybody knows that the man who is advising these things is very foolish. We do not formulate in our minds the justification of the main principles that govern our society and have safely led us so far.

Is it possible that we can regard capitalistic society as a failure, when we consider that it has produced the sacrifices shown in the last war? That was the greatest flower of our society. We had doubts as to whether luxury and comfort had not sapped the capacity of our youth for courage and devotion. What is the answer? Never in the history of the race has there been shown a greater example of sacrifice to save the world from tyranny and make it better!

Equality  Liberty

Winning